

**2011 Guidance for Chief State School Officers**  
*Blue Ribbon Schools Program*

**U.S. Department of Education**



**Nomination Process**

OMB Control Number: 1860-0745  
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# **2011 Blue Ribbon Schools Program Nomination Process**

## **Introduction**

A National Recognition Program for American Schools

Since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools Program has honored America's most successful public and private elementary, middle, and high schools. A Blue Ribbon Schools flag waving overhead has become a trademark of excellence, a symbol of quality recognized by everyone from parents to policy-makers in thousands of communities.

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes schools whose students achieve at very high levels or schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program sets a standard of excellence for all schools striving for the highest level of achievement. Schools are eligible for Blue Ribbon recognition if they meet either one of two criteria:

- *High performing schools:* Schools that are ranked among the state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments in both reading (English language arts) and mathematics or that score at the highest performance level on tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested.
- *Improving schools:* Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that have reduced the achievement gap by improving student performance to high levels in reading (English language arts) and mathematics on state assessments or tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested.

At least one-third of the public schools nominated by each state must be schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Public schools must make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the year of their nomination. Blue Ribbon Schools are honored each year at a recognition ceremony in Washington, DC. The applications from the award-winning schools are posted on the Department's web site. Summaries from a small group of Blue Ribbon Schools visited each year identify educational practices that have been successful in closing the achievement gap.

## **Public School Nomination Process**

For public schools, the Secretary invites each Chief State School Officer (CSSO), including the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), to nominate those schools that meet either criterion for recognition.

In submitting the list of nominated schools, the CSSO of each state must certify that the nominated schools meet the minimum requirements established by the Department and describe any other criteria used by the state to nominate the schools. States must rely on their state assessment systems to identify schools for submission to the Secretary. The nomination criteria, including assessments, must pertain equally to all schools nominated from the individual state.

## **Performance Requirements**

The CSSO must ensure that the schools meet the Department's criteria for recognition before sending their names to the Department. The CSSO's representative is strongly encouraged to review the completed applications before they are submitted.

Please note: Schools must now be nominated based on their whole school performance, not just the highest grade tested. As a result, the Department has defined “high performing” to include the top 15 percent of schools in a state.

Based on state data, the CSSO will certify that the nominated schools meet one of two eligibility criteria:

- 1) *High performing schools.* “*High performing*” is defined by the CSSO of each state, but at a minimum means:
  - (a) that the achievement of the school’s students in the most recent year tested places the school among the highest performing schools in the state on state assessments of reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and
  - (b) disaggregated results for student subgroups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, must be similar to the results for all students tested.
- 2) *Improving schools:* If at least 40 percent of the school’s students are from disadvantaged backgrounds, a school may qualify if the achievement of its students has improved to high levels. “*Improved to high levels*” is defined by the CSSO of each state but, at a minimum, means:
  - (a) the school has demonstrated a positive trend in test results from the earliest to the most recent year tested,
  - (b) in the most recent year tested, the achievement of the school’s students places the school in the top 40 percent of schools in the state on state assessments of reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and
  - (c) disaggregated results for student subgroups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, must show improvement similar to that of all students.

A student from a “*disadvantaged background*” is defined by the CSSO of each state. The definition must include low-income students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals and may include students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient, migrant, or receiving services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Once the Secretary receives the nominations from the CSSO, nominated schools are invited to submit applications for possible recognition as Blue Ribbon Schools.

The Secretary is eager to recognize schools that have shown success in improving their performance and/or closing the achievement gap. The Secretary wishes to identify those schools that significantly improved test scores, e.g. improving whole school test scores or student subgroup test scores by 10 or more percentage points from the earliest to the most recent year tested. The Secretary is also very interested in recognizing high performing schools with a high percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **Timeline for 2011 Blue Ribbon Schools**

- September 2010: The Secretary sends a letter of invitation to the Chief State School Officers (CSSOs), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), and the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) requesting the submission of information for nominated schools.
- November 22: Public school nominations from CSSOs, BIE, and DoDEA are due to the Department.
- December 3: Private school applications due to CAPE.
- December 6: The Department invites schools recommended by CSSOs, BIE, and DoDEA to apply for recognition as Blue Ribbon Schools.

January 2011:	CAPE selects its nominations.
February 18	Completed public and private school (from CAPE) applications are due to the Department.
March:	Applications are reviewed for completeness and accuracy.
April:	Applications are reviewed for compliance with eligibility criteria.
August:	States certify that nominated public schools have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
September:	The Secretary announces the 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools.
November:	Two representatives from each school, the principal and a teacher, attend the recognition ceremony in Washington, DC.

## Other Eligibility Requirements

*Percentage of high poverty schools:* At least one-third of the schools nominated by each state must have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the current school year, whether these schools are high performing or show improvement to high levels. For example, if a state nominates seven, eight, or nine schools, at least three must have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

*Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP):* States may not nominate schools that have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the last two years. Schools must also make AYP in the school year of their nomination.

*Five years of test data:* Test results for the whole school and each grade tested during the most recent five years must be reported even if the state has revised or changed its assessments during that period. In the rare cases where five years of test results are not available, an explanation should be provided in the application.

*Small schools:* Please note that small schools must have at least 100 students in the school in the most recent year tested. States may opt to exclude in the cut score rank ordering schools with less than 100 students enrolled.

*Student group size:* Report student test results for student groups and subgroups only if there are 10 or more students in a group.

*Schools also must meet the following requirements:*

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state’s Adequate Yearly Progress requirement in the 2010-2011 school year. AYP must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2005.

6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, or 2010.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

***What exactly does the state need to do to nominate public schools?***

The following procedures are designed to help states nominate schools for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program. Please note that Procedures I and III have been changed because schools are now to be nominated based on the whole school's performance.

**Procedure I. High Performing Schools**

**Determine the minimum percentage of students meeting or exceeding the state standard (who are proficient or advanced) in reading and in math for schools in the top 15 percent in your state for each grade in which state reading and math assessments are administered.** (You will be asked on the state nomination form to describe the students' test data you used to calculate these cutoff percentages. Please ask your schools to use the same method to record test data on their applications.)

- A. For reading (or English language arts) in each of the assessed grades, follow these steps:
  - Step 1: For each school in the state serving that grade, determine the percentage of students in that grade meeting or exceeding the state standard in reading (e.g., the percentage of students who are proficient plus the percentage who are advanced).
  - Step 2: Rank order all of these schools, from the highest to the lowest, based on the percentage of students proficient or advanced in that grade.
  - Step 3: Identify the schools in the top 15 percent of the list of rank-ordered schools from Step 2.
  - Step 4: From the schools in the top 15 percent, identify the school with the lowest percentage of students proficient or advanced in that grade. Note that the lowest school in the top 15 percent of all schools is the same as the school at the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of all schools.

Step 5: In Column I of the table for reading (or English language arts) results on the online State Nomination Form, record in the row for the appropriate grade the percentage of students proficient or advanced in reading in that grade identified in Step 4.

Step 6: Repeat the procedure for reading in *each assessed grade*.

B. For mathematics, repeat the above steps.

The values entered into Column I of the reading and math tables on the online State Nomination Form are referred to as the “cut scores” for the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile school at each assessed grade in reading and math.

**Procedure II:** For Improving Schools

**Determine the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the state standard (who are proficient or advanced) in reading and in math for schools in the top 40 percent in your state for each grade in which state reading and math assessments are administered.** (You will be asked on the state nomination form to describe the students’ test data you used to calculate these cutoff percentages. Please ask your schools to use the same method to record test data on their applications.)

A. For reading (or English language arts) in each of the assessed grades, follow these steps:

Step 1: For each school in the state serving that grade, determine the percentage of students in that grade meeting or exceeding the state standard in reading (e.g., the percentage of students who are proficient plus the percentage who are advanced).

Step 2: Rank order all of these schools, from the highest to the lowest, based on the percentage of students proficient or advanced in that grade.

Step 3: Identify the schools in the top 40 percent of the list of rank-ordered schools from Step 2.

Step 4: From the schools in the top 40 percent, identify the school with the lowest percentage of students proficient or advanced in that grade. Note that the lowest school in the top 40 percent of all schools is the same as the school at the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of all schools.

Step 5: In Column II of the table for reading (or English language arts) results on the online State Nomination Form; record in the row for the appropriate grade the percentage of students proficient or advanced in reading in that grade identified in Step 4.

Step 6: Repeat the procedure for reading in *each assessed grade*.

B. For mathematics, repeat the above steps.

The values entered into Column II of the reading and math tables on the online State Nomination Form are referred to as the “cut scores” for the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile school at each assessed grade in reading and math.

**Procedure III:** Select and Nominate Schools

**If you review the “cut score” tables completed, it is clear that the scores that define the top 15 (or top 40) percent vary by grade. A school’s grade level configuration, therefore, must be considered when deciding whether a school meets or exceeds the cut scores as a whole. Schools cannot be successfully nominated until Procedures I and II above have been completed.**

**Although the following steps are recommended, you are free to use any other procedure to select schools for nomination so long as they meet the nomination criteria.**

A. For reading (or English language arts) AND mathematics, follow these steps:

- Step 1: For each school in the state, determine the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the state standard in reading/ELA (e.g., the percentage of students who are proficient plus the percentage who are advanced) **across all tested grades in the entire school**. Then do the same with mathematics.
- Step 2: Rank order all of the schools, from the highest to the lowest, based on the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the state standard in the school in reading/ELA. Then do the same with mathematics.
- Step 3: Identify which schools are in the top 15 (or top 40) percent of the lists of rank-ordered schools in **both reading/ELA and in mathematics** from Step 2.
- Step 4: Starting from the top of the lists, identify the grade configurations of the schools you are interested in nominating and note which grades in the schools were tested.
- Step 5: Select the first school under consideration and compare its whole school reading/ELA and mathematics proficiency percents to the state grade level cut scores. To do this, click on “Check Eligibility” under State Liaison Forms on the website. Enter the whole school’s Reading/ELA score into the box provided. Under that box, check every grade in the school that was tested in Reading/ELA. Do the same for mathematics in the boxes provided. Click on “Check Test Scores.”
- Step 6: Compare the selected school’s whole school percents to the cut scores required in reading/ELA and mathematics. Note that the online form will provide both the scores needed for the school to be eligible as high performing (top 15 percent) and as improving (top 40 percent). Make sure you compare the school’s scores to the correct category. The online form will tell you whether the school meets the given cut scores. It does not necessarily mean the school will meet additional nomination criteria.
- Step 7: Repeat Steps 4-6 as necessary for schools of varying grade configurations.

B. Confirm that improving schools **show an increase** in the percent of proficient students from the earliest year tested to the most recent year tested based on their **whole school scores**. The greater the increase in proficiency, the greater the interest the Blue Ribbon Schools Program has in the school. For example:

- a. School A improved from 85% proficient in the earliest year to 86% proficient in the most recent year. That is acceptable.
- b. School B improved from 85% proficient in the earliest year to 90% proficient in the most recent year. That is desirable.
- c. School C stayed at 85% from the earliest to the most recent year. They do not qualify as improving.

C. Please contact the school to ensure that the school is interested in completing the application according to the sample application found on the Department’s website at the following address: [www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/applicant.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/applicant.html). Please substitute another eligible school if a school

has no interest in the program. It is the Department's intention that all schools nominated both qualify and apply for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program.



***What exactly should be sent to the Department?***

Please provide the information by November 22, 2010, using an online State Nomination Form. Each state liaison will be given an ID code to log on to the website at <http://blueribbon.rmcses.com> to complete the online State Nomination Form. The original signed **cover sheet only** should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program [Aba.Kumi@ed.gov](mailto:Aba.Kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) or faxed to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173, fax: 202-260-7464.

In early December, the Department will invite the schools to apply. School applications are due by **February 18, 2011**. Schools are required to submit their applications online. Each nominated school will be given an ID code to submit the online application. We recommend that the state review the applications before final submission to the U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Schools Program to ensure that the test results are accurately stated and that the narrative sections reflect the quality expected by the CSSO. This review would also serve to verify that the school meets the assessment eligibility requirements of the Blue Ribbon Schools Program. We also strongly encourage the CSSO to have the state assessment director or the director's designee verify that the schools' test results are accurate and consistent with state reported data.

**The Following Section is a Sample of the Online State Nomination Form.**



## 2011 Blue Ribbon Schools - Nomination Summary

There are five steps to the nomination process:

1. Fill out information about yourself as nominator.
2. Fill out the State Information.
3. Fill out the Reading and Mathematics Cut Score Tables.
4. Create a list of the schools to be nominated that includes the name, address, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address for the nominated school and the principal's name. For public schools, please provide the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price meals and the total school student enrollment. At least 1/3 (one-third) of the public schools nominated by each state must have at least 40% of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds. You must clearly designate schools as being in one of two categories: if the school is a "high performing" school that is in the top 15% of schools in the state, or is a "improving" school that is in the top 40% of the schools in the state with at least 40% of the school's students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
5. For assistance in ascertaining that a school meets the 'whole school' cut scores, click on "Check Eligibility" on the menu

You may exit and return at any time. When the information is complete and final click the submit button on the Nomination Final Submission page to generate a printable copy and electronically transmit the nominations.

Have the cover page of the Nomination Form signed by your Chief State School Officer and forward it to the Department.

The state liaison contact for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program is:

Liaison name:	<input type="text" value="Ms."/>	<input type="text" value="First:"/>	<input type="text" value="c"/>	<input type="text" value="Last:"/>	<input type="text" value="c"/>	<input type="text" value="Title:"/>			
Organization:	<input type="text"/>								
Address:	<input type="text"/>								
City:	<input type="text"/>	State:	<input type="text"/>	Zip:	<input type="text"/>	Phone:	<input type="text"/>	Fax:	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	Email:	<input type="text"/>						

Save Changes

Cancel



## Blue Ribbon Schools - State Information

1. Please provide a very brief explanation of the state's assessment system. If the information is on the state's website, please reference the web address where the information may be found. Please describe what students' test data you used to calculate the cut off percentages found in the data tables. For example, did the data include all students participating in the assessment or did these data include only those students the school was held accountable for in determining AYP?

2. What are the terms used in your state to describe the different levels of student performance? For example, Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Advanced:

3. Of the terms in (2), which level(s) and terminology designate proficient in the state's assessment system? Example: Levels: 2 and 3; Terminology: Proficient and Advanced

Level(s):

Terminology:

4. Please provide a brief explanation of the state's definition of disadvantaged student, such as those who are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals at the school, or are students who are limited English proficient, migrant, in need of special services, or receiving services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Submit Data

Cancel



## State Reading (LA or English) Cut Scores

Percentage Proficient Plus Advanced

2009-2010 Test Name:

Year test began:

Enter whole numbers only (round as needed). If test was not given in a grade, enter 0.

Grade Level	Percentage of students proficient plus advanced for all schools at the 85th percentile when schools are ranked according to percentage of students proficient plus advanced	Grade Level	Percentage of students proficient plus advanced for all schools at the 60th percentile when schools are ranked according to percentage of students proficient plus advanced
2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>	3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>	5	<input type="text"/>
6	<input type="text"/>	6	<input type="text"/>
7	<input type="text"/>	7	<input type="text"/>
8	<input type="text"/>	8	<input type="text"/>
9	<input type="text"/>	9	<input type="text"/>
10	<input type="text"/>	10	<input type="text"/>
11	<input type="text"/>	11	<input type="text"/>
12	<input type="text"/>	12	<input type="text"/>

Save Changes

Cancel



## State Mathematics Cut Scores

Percentage Proficient Plus Advanced

2009-2010 Test Name:

Year test began:

Enter whole numbers only (round as needed). If test was not given in a grade, enter 0.

Grade Level	Percentage of students proficient plus advanced for all schools at the 85th percentile when schools are ranked according to percentage of students proficient plus advanced	Grade Level	Percentage of students proficient plus advanced for all schools at the 60th percentile when schools are ranked according to percentage of students proficient plus advanced
2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>	3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>	5	<input type="text"/>
6	<input type="text"/>	6	<input type="text"/>
7	<input type="text"/>	7	<input type="text"/>
8	<input type="text"/>	8	<input type="text"/>
9	<input type="text"/>	9	<input type="text"/>
10	<input type="text"/>	10	<input type="text"/>
11	<input type="text"/>	11	<input type="text"/>
12	<input type="text"/>	12	<input type="text"/>



## School Nomination Eligibility

Before you nominate a school, you must check the school's test scores to determine if they meet the CUT score criteria for nomination. If you have not already completed the state Reading/ELA and Mathematics CUT score tables, STOP here and complete the tables before continuing.

To check a school's test scores, in the boxes below enter the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the state standards for reading/ELA and mathematics in the entire school in the most recent year tested. Then check a box for each grade tested in that subject area. When you click the Check Test Scores button at the bottom of this page you will see a screen that shows an indicator of whether this school meets the required scores for nomination as a High Performing School (top 15%) or Improving School (top 40%). For future reference, you will also see the scores required for the grade configuration you entered.

Because high schools typically only test one grade, high school grade level data may be compared directly to the appropriate grade cut score instead of the school average.

Note that there are other criteria that must also be met, such as but not limited to showing an increase in proficiency for the past five years for improving schools and making AYP in the current year and for the past two years. See the Nomination Process Instructions for details.

School Name:

### Reading/ELA:

Percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards for reading/ELA in the entire school:

%

Reading/ELA grades tested:

- ☐ - Grade 2   ☐ - Grade 3   ☐ - Grade 4   ☐ - Grade 5   ☐ - Grade 6   ☐ - Grade 7  
☐ - Grade 8   ☐ - Grade 9   ☐ - Grade 10   ☐ - Grade 11   ☐ - Grade 12

### Mathematics:

Percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards for mathematics in the entire school:

%

Mathematics grades tested:

- ☐ - Grade 2   ☐ - Grade 3   ☐ - Grade 4   ☐ - Grade 5   ☐ - Grade 6   ☐ - Grade 7  
☐ - Grade 8   ☐ - Grade 9   ☐ - Grade 10   ☐ - Grade 11   ☐ - Grade 12

Check Test Scores

Cancel



## 2011 Blue Ribbon Schools - Summary

( 1 of 35 nomination allocations used)

	#	School	City	Progress	District
<a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Deactivate</a>	1				

Check School Eligibility

Add School Nomination

### Progress Key:

#### Nomination Status

- Not Nominated means the nominator has not performed the Nomination Final Submission.

#### Application Status

- Not Started means the school has been nominated but has not completed the application cover page.
- In Progress means the school has completed the cover page but has not submitted the Application.
- Submitted means the school submitted the completed final application.

Save Changes

Cancel



## Certification and Nomination Final Submission

Check that you have completed the following items:

- ☐ Checked and updated your contact information as required;
- ☐ Completed and verified all school nominations for your state, including providing all information called for on the submission page;
- ☐ Completed and verified the State Information;
- ☐ Completed and verified the Reading and Mathematics cut scores for your state.

I certify that the schools on the attached list meet the minimum requirements established by my state for "high performing" schools and/or "improving" schools as defined by the Blue Ribbon Schools criteria.

Type your name to electronically sign:

Date: 7/28/2010 Title:

By typing your name in the above box and clicking the Submit Nominations button below you are certifying this information is true.

Submit Nominations

Cancel